

Week Ending Friday, September 5, 2008

The President's Radio Address

August 30, 2008

Good morning. This weekend, millions of Americans will celebrate Labor Day. This holiday marks the traditional end of the summer season. It is also an opportunity to reflect on the contributions of hard-working Americans all across our country—from teachers, farmers, and health care professionals, to firefighters, police officers, small-business owners, and workers on the assembly line.

The American workforce continues to be the marvel of the world, yet many working families have been weathering tough economic times. There are families across our country struggling to make ends meet. There is an understandable concern about the high price of gas and food, and many Americans are worried about the health of our housing and job markets.

I share these concerns about our economy, yet there have been some recent signs that our economy is beginning to improve. While the housing market is continuing to experience difficulty, the decline in home sales has leveled off recently, and sales are rising in some parts of the country. Orders for some durable goods, such as business equipment, are rising. And earlier this week, we received a report that America's economy grew in the second quarter at an annual rate of 3.3 percent, surprising analysts who were predicting an economic recession.

These welcome signs indicate that the economic stimulus package that I signed earlier this year is having its intended effect. The growth package will return more than \$150 billion back to American families and businesses this year. Many Americans who received tax rebates are spending them. Businesses are taking advantage of tax incentives

to purchase new equipment this year. And there are signs that the stimulus package will continue to have a beneficial impact on the economy in the second half of the year.

Labor Day is also the traditional start of the election season. In the coming months, it will be tempting for some in Congress to try to score political points instead of getting work done for the American people. Our citizens deserve better. We still have time to accomplish important goals for our country. My administration remains hopeful that we can work with Democratic leaders in Congress on bipartisan measures to help Americans cope with this period of economic uncertainty.

We need to work together on a comprehensive approach to our energy problems. I've called on Congress to permit us to tap vast, unused sources of oil and gas, expand domestic refining capacity, and encourage the development of alternative energy sources. Congress continues to stand in the way of this comprehensive approach. At a minimum, Democratic leaders in Congress should move forward on commonsense energy proposals that have bipartisan support, and it is not too late to do this. They should act responsibly by lifting the ban on offshore drilling, expanding access to oil shale, and implementing long-term tax credits to spur the development of alternative sources of energy like wind, solar, and nuclear power.

We need to work together to open up markets for American goods. Exports account for a greater share of America's gross domestic product than at any time in our history. It is not too late for Congress to approve free trade agreements with strong allies like Colombia, Panama, and South Korea, so that we can create more opportunities for American farmers, ranchers, and entrepreneurs.

We need to work together to keep your taxes low. At a time of economic challenge, the last thing American families need is a massive tax increase. It's not too late for Congress to make the tax relief we passed in 2001 and 2003 permanent.

Despite our economic difficulties, there is every reason to be optimistic about America's future. Our workforce is dynamic and productive. Our economy is showing that it is resilient. And our Nation is the most industrious, creative, and prosperous on Earth.

Laura and I wish you a safe and joyous Labor Day weekend. Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:50 a.m. on August 29 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 30. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 29 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks Following a Briefing at the Federal Emergency Management Agency

August 31, 2008

I'm here at the FEMA Headquarters where I just received a briefing, and I've also come to thank the people behind me for working the long hours that they're doing to make sure that we've got the preparations in place for Hurricane Gustav. There's been a lot of work done to get ready for the storm. Across the gulf coast, there's Governors and State officials and local leaders that are taking this storm very seriously and are preparing proactively.

Secretary Chertoff and FEMA Administrator Paulison report that the Federal Government has prepositioned teams of emergency managers, doctors, ambulances, search and rescue teams, aircraft, and commodities throughout the region. There are millions of meals and millions of liters of water prestaged, as well as a lot of blankets and

cots. In other words, there's a lot of preparations that have gone in, in anticipation of this storm.

We're working with Governors to identify and secure out-of-State shelter for people in the path of the storm. Several States, including Missouri, Texas, and New Mexico, are in the—are preparing to and have accepted a lot of evacuees. People are leaving those areas that are of concern, and we're working hard to make sure that they have a place to go.

The Army Corps of Engineers informs me that while the levees are stronger than they've ever been, people across the gulf coast, especially in New Orleans, need to understand that in a storm of this size there is serious risk of significant flooding.

The message to the people of the gulf coast is, this storm is dangerous. There's a real possibility of flooding, storm surge, and high winds. And therefore, it is very important for you to follow the instructions and direction of State and local officials. Do not put yourself in harm's way or make rescue workers take unnecessary risks. And know that the American people stand with you, and that we'll face this emergency together.

In the coming days, I encourage people across our Nation to help their neighbors in need. You can contribute to charities such as the Red Cross. You can volunteer your time to help those in need. And of course, you can pray for those who might be suffering.

In light of these events, I will not be going to Minnesota for the Republican National Convention. I'm going to travel down to Texas tomorrow to visit with the Emergency Operations Center in Austin, where coordination among Federal, State, and local government officials is occurring. I intend to go down to San Antonio, where State and local officials are prepositioning relief materials for Texas and Louisiana. And I'll have a chance to visit with residents of both States who have been evacuated.